The Seed Sower.

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Let Your Light so Shine.

Sometimes, O Lord, Thou lightest in my head
A lamp that well might pharos all the lands;
Anon the light will neither burn nor spread—
Shrouded in danger gray the beacon stands.

A pharos? Oh, dull brain! Oh, poor quenched lamp,
Under a bushel, with an earthy smell!
Mouldering it lies, in rust and eating damp,
While the slow oil keeps oozing from its cell!

For me it were enough to be a flower,
Knowing its root in earth was somewhere hid—
To blossom at the far-appointed hour
And fold in sleep when thou, my nature, bid.

But hear my brethren crying in the dark!
Light up my lamp that it may shine and spread.
Fain would I cry—See! brothers, sisters, mark!
This is the shining of light's father, God.

Two Epigrams.

With peaceful mind thy race of duty run,
God nothing does, or suffers to be done,
But what thou would'st thyself, if thou could'st see
Through all events of things as well as He.

Think, and be careful, what thou art within,
For there is sin in the desire for sin;
Think, and be thankful, in a different case,
For there is grace in the desire for grace.

JOHN BYROM.

The Optimism of Old Age.

A SERMON,

BY WM. HAMILTON DRUMMOND, B.A.

"No Spring nor Summer beauty hath such grace
As I have seen in an Autumnal face."

JOHN DONNE.

"Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God. I am the Lord."

LEVIT. xix. 32.

"I have been young and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken."

PSALM xxxvii. 25.

These two texts bring the same subject before us from different points of view. The one is a command taken from a code of Hebrew law; the other is a confession of experience by a man who can look back over many chequered years of life. But they have this in common—they both speak of old age with reverence. There are passages in Scripture, like the last chapter of the Book of Ecclesiastes, where the subject is treated very differently. You may overhear the plaintive note of complaint or listen to the "cowardly and prudential proverbs" which tell us that years bring us wisdom and vanity. But the usual Bible attitude is the reverse of this. It is too sound at heart to linger over physical decay in face of spiritual maturity. This 37th Psalm is pre-eminently the old man's psalm, and it is no song of disenchantment. See how it glows

with quiet and deep faith in the goodness of God and of life's experience. "Trust in the Lord and do good;" "Delight thyself in the Lord and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart; trust also in Him and He shall bring it to pass . . . Rest in the Lord and wait patiently for Him . . . The meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace . . The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord, and He delighteth in his way. Though he fall he shall not be utterly cast down; for the Lord upholdeth him with His hand. I have been young, and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread . . . I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo! he was not: yea, I sought for him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace." I know not where you will find a more beautiful or convincing expression of the optimism of old age.

It is well for us to listen to it even if we have little of this calm of mind, and can only wonder whether in coming years it will be our experience too. Let it throw back some of its brightness and confidence upon our struggle and give us courage. This is a better use to make of the influence of old age than to set it up as the mentor of youth, or to retail the rather chilly maxims of worldly wisdom which it is certain we shall never follow. Every time of life has its own temptations, its own experience, its own religious feeling, its own glory. As Stevenson says, "The true wisdom is to be always seasonable, and to change with a good grace in changing circumstances. To love playthings well as a child, to lead an adventurous and honourable youth, and to settle when the time arrives into a green and smiling age is to be a good artist in life and to deserve well of yourself and your neighbour."

And so without any attempt to forestall the experience which can only come with years, let us ask ourselves what are the chief things which we may learn from our companionship with the aged, what it is that their verdict upon life has to teach us. I can only speak to you of the impressions which have stolen into my own life. But it is good to believe that all this happiness and privilege is not on one side alone, and that we, who receive so much, may give something not without its value and sweetness in return.

Of all our human ties there is none which is more purely spiritual than that existing between youth and age. It is no flickering torch of feeling at the mercy of sudden gusts of passion. It is not a partnership of effort for wealth or knowledge or power. It is a relation of reverence, gratitude, and helpfulness. It is love not for a beautiful face or an April mood, but love for the soul, which has passed through life's struggle and is touched already with the glory of life's victory. It is our sense of how holy this relation may be that turns its betrayal on either side into a profaned sacrament. There can hardly be a deeper vulgarity of spirit than that which keeps its mocking tone and hard manner in the presence of revered old age. But there is a spectacle which is even more pitiable; it is that of the old age which good men cannot reverence, to which experience has brought no chastening, and the hand of time has added only a deeper torpor to the soul.

Those who have never stood in relations of intimate affection with Christian old age have missed some of the best influences of life. The spiritual charm of the relationship almost escapes us when we try to put it into words. It is not only the delight of companionship in thought and aim, that we can often feel best with those of our own age. It is not merely the appeal of ignorance to ripened wisdom, as of children to a teacher. We have many teachers of keen sight and sound judgment who are not far removed from us in years. It is not only our anxiety for the hoary head and the trembling limbs. We feel the same anxious care when the strong man is struck down in the midst of his days. All these elements of feeling are present, but there is something more. The Old Testament writer understood it when he spoke in one breath of "honouring the face of the old man" and "fearing God." And we feel it whenever, in the midst of life's trouble and ambition, we become more collected and calm by our fellowship with old people, whenever our selfishness is rebuked, our thought and speech made kindlier in tone, our faith in goodness confirmed, our love rekindled for the simple joys, the quiet duties, and the tender humanities of life.

It is often hard in the case of a man who is busy with the world's occupations to tell what is the final reality in which he believes, what for him is the chief good which life contains. Now it seems to be money, or pleasure, or material success, or power over other men; but again you find him the tender husband and father in his home; he is unexpectedly generous, and makes a sincere attempt to be religious. There are, in fact, so many cross-currents of motive and feeling in his life that it would be hard to predict, whether in the contest for permanence, the material or the spiritual will win. We must look elsewhere if we are to read the final issues of life with clearness. And here the optimism of old age comes in to reinforce all the native instincts of faith. "I have been young, and now am old, yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken." The aged Christian may tell you that many of his efforts have ended in disappointment, that he has spent time and energy on tasks which were not worth the labour; but he will never tell you that life is a process of disillusion. For as he looks back he does not repent of his love and goodness and self-sacrifice. Neither does he bid you be on your guard lest your unselfish impulses should spoil the real purpose of life. From everyone who has fought his doubt and borne his cross, or in humble paths of duty tried to follow in the steps of Christ, as the light of heaven begins to shine around him, there comes a word of cheer to all who are travelling along the same road and struggling with the same life-experience. That men may grow holy through the conquest of temptation; that they may reap, after many days, the spiritual fruit of their pain; that the heart may be enriched, the judgment gain new accents of tenderness and charity, the soul be gladdened with a closer walk with God, in a word, that all we mean by the Christian character, the Christian temper, the Christian peace, is no fading dream,—this is one of the revelations of old age.

And we see it most clearly in those who, old in years, are ever young in heart. What a noble confession this is which George Meredith wrote a short time ago: "I suppose I should regard myself as getting old—I am 74. But I do not feel to be growing old either in heart or mind. I still look on life with a young man's eye. I have always hoped that I should not grow old as some do—with a palsied intellect, living backwards, regarding other people as anachronisms because they themselves have lived on into other times and left their sympathies behind them with their years." Words like these, with their beautiful spirit of youthfulness, are an exact descripton of some people we have known. How they help us in the long fight to keep our courage high and our faith clear, to keep our courage high and our faith clear, to refuse to pay the tribute of withered sympathies to advancing years, to be young in heart, dowered with invincible hopefulness, while God has still a fresh lesson to teach us!

Lastly, Christian old age is a perpetual Immanuel, a sign that God is with us. As I think of it, there seems to me no greater miracle than this fruit of the Divine disciple, the finished life. There is sunshine from God in the face of the little child. There is a revelation of the Divine goodness and power in the noble activities of youth and middle age. But to catch the glory full-orbed we must turn to those in whom time has brought out the lineaments of eternity. How wonderful it is that we should have, as the familiar companions of our homes, those who are so near to heaven! They see the light shining through the veil, which is so dark to us. And when it is gently lifted by an unseen hand, and they pass within, they have only gone a very short journey, leaving as a parting gift to us a deeper peacefulness in our thought of them and of God, a glad sense of fellowship with the unseen realities of life, and a prayer that while life remains we may never be unworthy of what we have learned as the friends and companions of a beautiful old age.

Usury.

The charge to lend without thought of profit on the loan is one of those counsels of perfection in the Sermon on the Mount which move the wonder of business men. But in morals, as in art, there can be only one standard, the highest, and the counsel given must of necessity be a counsel of perfection. The end proposed may not be immediately attained, but the aim must not be lowered. It is more blessed, because it is more Divine, to give than to receive—let this supreme, unalterable fact be kept in view, and then it will be seen that the law of benevolence is a law which

cannot be brought under the ordinary rules of business transactions.

Our word "usury," though now used as illegal or excessive return upon money lent, was at one time nothing more than "interest," and the lawfulness, even of moderate interest, was a matter that troubled the Jewish conscience, just as it afterwards troubled the conscience of Christian schoolmen and divines in the Middle Ages. The taking of interest is forbidden in three of the five Books of Moses, in at least two of the Prophets, and in a well-known Psalm one of the signs of a blameless life is abstinence from usury. The effect of this teaching was afterwards felt in Christian Europe, and was very much strengthened by Aristotle's famous argument that money gained from money lent is unnatural gain, because money in itself is unproductive, cannot "breed," and interest (τόκος), to be justifiable, ought to be that which comes back as natural produce. This wide-spread repugnance may perhaps be accounted for by the fact that, in early stages of civilisation, loans of money are employed, not as capital, but for immediate satisfaction of pressing want, and to take more in return than was lent was to take advantage of a neighbour's necessity. The use of borrowed money as capital for profitable production stands now on very different ground, and the wants of the necessitous are often relieved by making them lenders of the little means they have, and not borrowers of that which they have not. Money lent is money which the lender might himself have used as capital for trade, and, if he takes less from the borrower than that which the latter ultimately gains by borrowing, he can hardly be said to have done him an injustice. Moreover, the poor, it is sometimes said, would suffer most, if all taking of interest were prohibited, for it is by small pledges that they meet temporary difficulties, and by easy payments that they borrow capital.

Yet there must be some reason why, even in our own times, reformers, quite free from theological bias, have declaimed, with all the fervour of prophets and divines, against the use of borrowed capital and public loans, and all such sources of revenue, public or private. Mr. Ruskin, as is well known, denounced usury most strongly, and in his sternly logical way made it include "all investments of capital whatsoever, returning dividends, as distinguished from labour wages or profits." He thought it wrong that a man should take up that which he laid not down, and that increase should come through decrease to another. It is easy to meet these statements with counter-argument, and yet who can think without fear and anxiety of the mania we all have for idle, as apart from industrious, investment, for money-lending—for that is what it comes to—as a means of living without a livelihood? In these days of conversion of private firms into public companies the opportunities for idle investment are vastly increased. There is no form of property which so much exempts the owner from labour and responsibility, and sometimes even from care and concern—as in the case of Government securities—as the ownership of stocks and shares. In numberless instances the receiver of dividends has nothing to do but to receive them. The commercial utility may be great, but the social benefits are doubtful—a moral value no one would seriously affirm. It is a hard question—one of the hardest that we are called upon to face—but it is the hard question, and the evaded question, that religion is meant to face and solve. For a definite pronouncement we still wait, but the argument is close at hand, and, if we deal fairly with it, the conclusion will come. As a matter of Christian ethics, it cannot be said that the lending of money at interest, whether for immediate relief or as capital for productive use, is specifically forbidden, nor even that such prohibition can be inferred. The restraining rule must be sought for under the general warning against covetousness. To provide for the young, the weak, the old, it would in many cases be almost an abuse of conscientious scruple not to turn to those "securities" which give the required security for those who cannot help themselves. If such provision is made out of the savings of labour and thrift and abstinence, and care is taken that the investment serves the public good, and is not opposed to it, there is nothing so far that conscience need disapprove. But when the object is not provision against want, but the attainment of affluence, and when a point is reached at which labour and abstinence are superfluous, and enjoyment only is thought of, and the power of making and bequeathing a fortune becomes an absorbing passion, then religious consideration may very well come into play. The bond of Christian

rotherhood is broken when you step out of ne ranks as one for whom others must now oil and spin, that you may take your ease and e merry. And the bond between you and hrist, your leader, is broken also, for he said, My Father worketh hitherto, and I His Son, ecause I am His Son, work His works, and ork to-day *and* to-morrow." The deceitful- ess of riches was, to him, the worst thing bout them. They made men who had no nxiety about their lower wants insensible to he higher wants of their being; they dulled he sense of duty; they made men poorer in ffort, and so less "rich towards God." If he rew no fast line, and laid down no sumptuary aw, he threw the weight of his teaching on he side of willing poverty, the poverty of one who knows what things he has need of, and is ontent to be taught what things he is better without. The spirit of his teaching we are piritually bound to apply when we may, and as we can. E. P. Barrow.

The Conference.

By an Impressionist.

Crowds of parsons, the younger ones in ultra-clerical attire, Roman collars and all the rest of it; the elderly men in more modest apparel, *not* "arrayed like one of these." The eager greeting of friends and old college chums, much gossip in corners, a thousand enquiries, general grumbling at the tea arrangements, and adjournment of select parties to neighbouring cafés, communion of spirit over sundry pipes; and, pervading all, a subdued excitement as of battle and thunder in the air, or suspected dynamite in the vaults, anent the fearsome word "organization."

Great admiration for the papers read, which would have been greater still had they been a little shorter; breathless astonishment at the sixty miles an hour rush of Dr. Hunter's delivery, wide-spread agreement with his searching criticism, but much displeasure on the part of a few ante-flood and pre-Noachian men at the plea for beauty, behaviour, appropriate forms, and a decent orderliness in worship; the whole room quickened and electrified by the personal magnetism of the speaker, and responsive to the intense spiritual power of a very remarkable utterance.

Not a very satisfactory afternoon—Mr. Drummond's paper on the "Pastoral Ideal" would have been sufficient for a good discussion in a purely ministerial gathering. Mr. Graham's paper attempted too much. The Chairman's disquisition on Ambrose and Theodosius, with its oblique application to recent events, was as amusing as it was entirely out of place.

The President's quite unexpected and altogether audacious proposal to change the centre of gravity for our churches from the Unitarian Association to the Conference, by raising £60,000 to enable the Conference to undertake the work of Church-Aid, had somewhat discounted the interest in Mr. Wood's paper on "Church Needs and Conference Ideals." As it turned out it was seen that Mr. Wood's proposals were quite independent of the President's plan, and could be attempted with or without its realisation. The paper, to the surprise of many, aroused less opposition than was expected, and, indeed, was very warmly received. Mr. Dendy's speech created a great impression, and the resolution to refer both the President's and Mr. Wood's suggestions to the Committee for consideration and report was unanimously adopted.

However, everyone felt that for the moment, the whole question of organisation settled round a most innocent-looking recommendation from the committee, *i.e.* that the Conference should appoint a paid secretary to carry out its behests. The result proved with what wisdom a meeting, when it is not too severely ridden by officials, may work its way to a sensible conclusion. Once or twice it seemed as if there might be an explosion, but good temper prevailed. Nothing like a fight came off—much to the disappointment of the on-looker. A great muddle at the beginning was gradually cleared away; amendment after amendment suffered defeat, and at last the resolution adopted empowered the committee to appoint a secretary, without any of the limitations proposed. It was a triumph of good sense and it gave its promoters exactly what they desired. Mr. Dendy again proved himself a wise counsellor by his plea that the Conference

having unanimously referred certain large, grave, and pressing questions to the committee would stultify itself by refusing the committee proper assistance.

A memorable Conference—perhaps the most important of the whole series. Much thankfulness that the two streams of tendency in our midst had in fact been drawn closer together instead of driven further apart as had been feared. After the excitement, not to say turmoil, of the previous day, it was like coming into green pastures and by still waters to listen to Mr. Jupp. His story of the Pilgrimage of a Human Soul fell upon us with the grace of a benediction. Men said that theologically it was at fault, yet all felt the truth and beauty of the personal narrative, and all were deeply moved by the unveiling of a spiritual experience so full of eager sincerity, so open to the growing light, so manifestly a divine leading.

Memories crowd on one of other papers, meetings, discussions, and much stimulating talk into late hours of the night. The public meeting would have been a greater success in a smaller room with better acoustics. Generous hosts; a right royal welcome from Liverpool friends; from first to last a splendid attendance; and above all a quickened sense of fellowship which sent men home with new hope and courage, made the Conference of 1903 a gathering long to be remembered.

Impressions from the Conference.

I have attended all the Triennials since their inauguration in 1882, and I am sure I have returned with most satisfaction from the latest. I suppose the Conference at Leeds, in 1888, excited the highest anticipations, and was followed by the deepest regret. For myself, the recent one held out least prospect, and has given most encouragement. Many of us have come back to our work saying, "Thank God for the Conference of 1903." We expected a fight, another breaking and tearing of the slender bonds between us, another cleavage between the "Conference men" and the "Men of Essex Hall." There seemed likely to be one more depressing discomfiture for those who regard with grave concern the condition of our churches, and are anxious to federate against the tendencies of disunion and decline. Others besides myself may have gone to Liverpool saying, "This probably will be my last Conference, and possibly the giving up of the ministry." Happily these gloomy forebodings have not been realised. From almost the opening sentences of the President's brave and statesmanlike address hope began to revive. That speech gave the right note to all the subsequent proceedings. It was in accordance with our best traditions. It offered a solution for long-lasting, deeply-rooted, menacing difficulties. It appealed to us to *Do* something, and told us *What* to do. And it was from a man honoured and loved by every section among us. When it was concluded and its suggestions, by a unanimous vote, were referred to the Committees for consideration, I was conscious that the war cloud had lifted and the air was clear.

Next morning Dr. Hunter's magnificent statement of the claims of worship and irresistible plea for a more devotional and refined conduct of Divine service brought us down again to first principles and made us feel, as perhaps hardly anything else could, that the *WORSHIP OF GOD, without insistence on particular theological beliefs*, was the central fact of our existence. Apart from that we are nothing. Our truth and our truthfulness are mere derivatives from it. The moment these take the precedence or claim independence they begin to perish.

Then on Thursday came Mr. Wood's convincing paper, simply overwhelming in its appeal for closer union and concerted action, crowded with useful facts and figures, and wise reflection that was the outcome of his twenty-one years of service in our churches. Carlyle's remark about the lady who was "willing to accept the universe" was applied with telling effect to our willingness to accept federation—"Gad, she had better!" As we had continually recognised ourselves in Dr. Hunter's tremendous indictment of slovenliness in public prayer, so Mr. Wood's sympathetic and pitiful relation of the weaknesses of our ecclesiastical life awakened again and again murmurs of "It's true."

When the suggestions of this address also had been handed on to the Committee there could be little doubt as to the appointment of

a secretary. Nothing but the spirit of dilatoriness, not to say anarchy, could have refused it. The need of the Conference not merely as a Deliberative but as an Executive representative body was obvious; the only question was, how much? There was a desire on all hands to give and take. One or two attempts to throw fuel on smouldering embers were not welcomed. The wisdom of our leaders, especially of Dr. Odgers and Professor Carpenter, appeared in the solid front they offered to the objectors from opposite camps. As the afternoon wore on, and amendment after amendment failed, delegates and ministers became more and more convinced in their judgment, and finally gave the Committee power to elect a paid secretary without limitation.

What could be better for all concerned? We don't want these miserable "safeguards" in a liberal body like ours. We shall learn the quicker to trust one another without them. Mr. Armstrong's words, though now and again I thought undeservedly severe, could not fail to influence some of us who have been suspicious and critical of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association. I for one accept his friendly overtures in the spirit in which they were offered. I am prepared to believe that the Association will not merely give the Conference a free hand, but will let us have its valuable help in the realisation of our aims. I will therefore drop the hostile attitude; and if Mr. Bowie, for whose enthusiasm and energy none of us but has a warm admiration, thinks it worth while to include my name in the Essex Hall Year Book I shall be pleased that he should do so.

EDGAR I. FRIPP.

Mansfield, 8th May.

"Catching Cold."

"Now *not* to catch cold" in England would be a lesson for which we should all be profoundly grateful, could any of our doctors be clever enough to teach it to us. As there seems, however, to be few people more troubled with the malady than doctors themselves, and as nothing is more common than for a physician and his patient to exchange confessions, counsels, and condolences, in words compounded of exclusive M's and B's, it is useless to hope that we shall ever obtain a specific preservative from that quarter. Our only chance is to notice carefully how we ourselves personally most frequently incur what the profession magniloquently describes as "the premonitory symptoms of catarrh," and then do our best to avoid them in future. Obviously, different people catch cold in different ways. The popular delusion that it is always by a chill that the affection begins, seems contradicted by the experience of scores of persons who never "catch cold" by exposure to a frigid temperature, but who begin to feel the miserable antecedents of the disorder while spending an hour in an over-heated room, or perhaps confined to bed from some other ailment. It is not to be calculated, on the other hand, how many people will allow themselves the expensive luxury of a long cold by economising fires, and sitting in parlours and drawing-rooms below the temperature needful to keep up the circulation healthfully. Then, again, many of us are aware that we may literally "catch" our colds, as we might do a fever or the smallpox, from proximity to some one already in the feverish stage of the malady. To sit next to such a sufferer in a railway carriage, or to have him, or her, for neighbour at a dinner party, or as a sharer of our own apartments, is often to incur the doom of feeling in a few hours afterwards that horrible roughness somewhere in the very middle of our heads, between ears, nose, and mouth, which (as we hopelessly recognise) will next set us sneezing, and then gradually introduce us to all the sensations of stuffy head, feverish lips, sore throat, and a cough to last till next summer. Of course, we all soon learn that colds are most easily caught when we are bored or depressed, while high excitement carries us through the most alarming exposures scatheless. Whether it be that such excitement is generally lacking in listening to sermons, or that churches are mostly ill warmed, or whether, further, there be a certain attractive sense of martyrdom in conscious and ostentatious suffering from attendance at a religious service, we do not presume to say. But certain it is that ten people complain of having caught cold at church for one who confesses to having caught it at a ball or the theatre. Dull parties also are obviously more dangerous to the chest than brilliant ones, and driving in cabs and omnibuses rather than whirling along in a barouche or a four-in-hand.

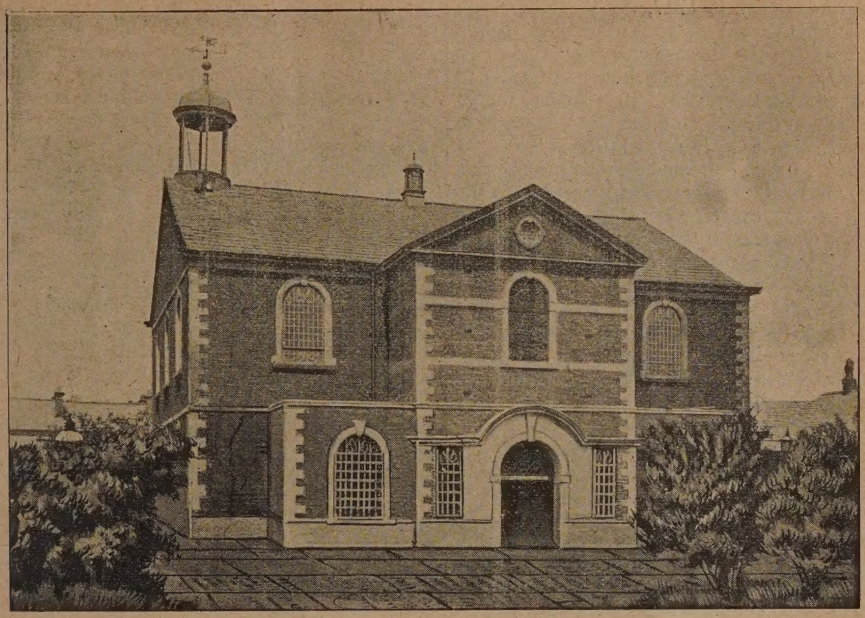
People engaged to work by the month or year are more often "laid up with a terrible cold, which they greatly regret will prevent them from fulfilling their duties," than other people who earn their money by the job; and, as a general rule, the most frequent sufferers are always those who, like Coleridge, "no sooner recognise anything to be a duty than they are immediately seized with a sense of inability to perform it."

Among the discoveries of science, none is said to be more certain than that the food we eat in cold countries is largely transformed into the needful fuel to keep up the internal kitchen; only the superabundance being available for muscular and mental labour. In hot countries—Malta, for example—travellers observe that the coal porters are able to work all day, carrying loads up the endless streets of stairs, on a simple diet of bread and fruit, on which no man in England could perform any similar labour. The reason is plain. The porter's animal heat is almost sufficiently sustained by the climate, and his food, such as it is, nearly all goes directly to muscular strength. Here we want the food merely to keep up bodily warmth, and if we expend any of it in muscular, or in (far more exhausting) brain labour, the consequence is a sort of corporeal bankruptcy. Now, it is quite certain that it is in some of these states of exhaustion that we are most apt to catch cold, if, indeed, we ever catch cold in the full vigour acquired by a recent healthy meal. It is before breakfast, while we are faint from the long interval since yesterday's dinner, or when we are defrauded of our mid-day meal for too long a time, that we usually receive a chill, just as it is at such times we are most liable to receive infectious diseases of all kinds. Thus it would seem as if the old and much-despised proverb, "Stuff a cold and starve a fever," had in it at least so much sense, that if we only "stuff" carefully before any special exposure to cold, we should never know that miserable "coryza" in our heads at all. Whether it be well to "stuff" after we have caught it, we must leave for the doctors and the patient to determine. Oysters and champagne for one, water gruel and camphor for another—every mode of treatment seems equally orthodox, down to poor Mrs. Nickleby's prescription of the hot bran and water foot-bath which she applied at Christmas for the cold she had caught at Michaelmas, and which, as she gratefully remembered, *almost* effected her cure before Easter!

We have observed of late years a strong tendency among people suffering from old-fashioned colds to try to find some other and finer names for those distressing but wholly prosaic and uninteresting affections; and blessed is the physician who supplies them with such a word! Like the young lady who asked her little brother "whether he were not proud of having a sister suffering from a chronic complaint, and who had signed a power of attorney?" they are much consoled in their affliction by being able to tell their friends that "Dr. Bumblebore thinks there is danger of diphtheria," or "there was nearly a congestion of the lungs yesterday," or "my medical man says it is pleuro-pneumonia," or "the mucous membrance of the thorax is greatly irritated." Nobody, in fact, whose maladies are of sufficient consequence to the universe to be given a name at all, has, so far as we know, condescended for some time past to have a "cold." They would as soon think of confessing they had the distemper. "Influenza" is the very mildest term by which their suffering can be decently expressed; and, of course, the remedies for the evil must be equally serious and sonorous. No quiet stopping in bed, no hot posset, no tamarind tea, no barley-water and hot foot-bath, for our generation! We must swallow half the poisons in the Pharmacopœia —allopathetic or homœopathic—and perhaps the conclusion sometimes is, not that the cold leaves us, but that we leave the cold; and bequeath another to our unhappy relations, who are doomed to stand bare-headed for half-an-hour in the bitter wintry air while we are being consigned to the tomb. One of Maria Theresa's daughters refused to be buried in the imperial vault because the last princess who was interred there had died of the smallpox. It would certainly be more to the purpose if our funeral ceremonies involved less risk to the survivors of catching their own deaths in cold weather, beside a grave where every condition of mental depression and physical discomfort are carefully combined to add peril to the performance of the melancholy duty.

F. P. Cobbe.

Great God, have pity on the wicked; for thou didst everything for the good when thou madest them good!—Saadi.



CHOWBENT CHAPEL, ATHERTON, Nr. MANCHESTER.

ERECTED 1721. ENLARGED 1901. EARLIER CHAPEL ERECTED 1645.

Chowbent Chapel.

Chow, or Chowe (rhyming locally with *flow*), seems to have been the name of a yeoman-farmer of the 17th century (possibly the 16th); and the Bent (A.S. *beonet*, hill-side) was a somewhat difficult slope, or hill, up and down which, by the Chanter's Brook, along a road on the edge of Chow's Farm, all the wheel-traffic of the district, including the coaches, had to go. There was a considerable family of Chowes, as is shown by the Parish Register of the period, and the name appears in documents as early as the 13th century. But the yeoman-farmer we are speaking of, heir to his deceased father, Arthur, was George Chowe, whose house on the *bent*, tradition says, was "a famous Hostelrie," around which the old township grew. Hence Chow's Bent, or Chow-Bent as it was easier to say, came to be well known. And a curious thing happened: The whole district, which had for hundreds of years previously borne the name of Atherton from the Lords of the Manor, somehow took to itself the name of this yeoman-farmer, and called itself Chowbent, or, colloquially, simply Bent. How was this? May I venture a suggestion? There was in those days (the 17th century) only one place of worship in the township. It was our Presbyterian Chapel, erected in 1645—the year of Naseby. Most of the inhabitants of the township appear to have then been Presbyterians, as also evidently was the then Lord of the Manor. There is good documentary proof that this 1645 chapel was built by the congregation; *i.e.*, *not* by the Lord of the Manor, but with his sympathy, as he found the land. So good an understanding did there seem to be between the then Lord Atherton and the builders of the "chappell," that they never thought to get from him a deed or lease of the land on which the "chappell" stood! Moreover, so good a feeling was there towards the

Episcopalians that, in 1717, the Vicar of Leigh (an adjoining parish) reports to the then Bishop of Chester that the Presbyterians of "Chowbent Chappell" not only permit him occasionally to use their "unconsecrated" (!) chappell for an Episcopalian Service, but are kind enough to provide him with a Bible and Prayer Book for the same. I fear, however, that long before this (1717) the Lords of Atherton had ceased to be the friends of the congregation of the Presbyterian Chapel. One main difference may be called dynastical. The congregation (whose minister, Rev. James Wood, senior, was one of the "silenced" in 1662, and who, in 1670, was "catched and sent to prison," though under the Indulgence Act of 1672 he resumed his preaching again) had suffered enough under the Stuarts to make them heartily in favour of the new spirit of William and Mary (1689), and of the Hanoverian *régime*. Some of the Lords of Atherton, on the other hand, so sided with the Stuarts that the heir of the Athertons, born in 1700, was in due time brought up at the Court of the Stuarts abroad, and, when he came of age in 1721, this young man, as lord of the soil, seized the chappell, turned out the people whose fathers in 1645 had unquestionably built it, got it "consecrated" and made into an Episcopalian place of worship. On its site the present Parish Church now stands. A quaintly beautiful story is cherished as to the words in which the chappell was sadly handed over. An old man and his wife, living in a thatched cottage opposite the chappell, were the caretakers. They had the keys, and on any day the emissary from the lord of the soil was expected. He came one evening, and, as the old Dame lifted the keys for the last time from their accustomed nail in her cottage wall and handed them to the all-powerful messenger, she said: "Yo' con tak't kayes o't Chappill, bud yo' hannot t' kayes o' Heaven,—yo'n nod!" ("You can take the keys of the Chapel, but you haven't the keys of Heaven,—you've not!")

Here was the turning-point of a conflict which I fancy had been going on for many years between the later Lords of Atherton and this Presbyterian congregation. They had built the first chapel in 1645. They were turned out of it in 1721. But there is another historic fact to be noted—an event which happened in 1715. While the congregation still held the 1645 chapel the Rev. James Wood, junior, son of the James Wood already mentioned, had, in 1695, become the minister. Like his father, and like the congregation, he seems to have been of a vigorous, sturdy character. He had great influence, and one might fill pages with accounts of his sagacious, good-humoured sayings and doings. In the year 1715 this same James Wood was called upon, as men in other districts were, to get together quickly and arm all the "lusty young men," and others of his congregation and township, march to Preston, and at a point on the river there meet and stop the Pretender, who was on his way from Scotland to make another of the Stuart attempts to regain the throne. So gallantly and effectively did James Wood and his hundred stalwart men do this military business that he earned the name of General, and was ever afterwards affectionately known by his congregation and the district as "General Wood." Over the pulpit in the present chapel is an appropriate tablet commemorating his character. He died in 1759, aged 87, having been minister 60 years. The Parliamentary Records of the period show that James Wood received the special thanks of the Government for his valuable services, and a grant of £100 for his expenses. He might have had a larger sum (even an annuity of £100 a year, it is said), but would not hear of it.

Let us return now to the losing of the 1645 chapel. This was in "General" Wood's time (1721). Such a congregation, with such a minister, would not be easily beaten. And here we come back to George Chow again. Yeoman-Chow's estate was a *freehold*—the only freehold land in all the township. The congregation being chapel-less, part of this freehold was at once purchased by one of the good families who had been turned out of the 1645 chapel, and *on this freehold land* the present spacious chapel was immediately built in 1721. Already, as early as 1717, the people had begun to call the 1645 chapel "Chowbent Chappele," even though it *was* on the Atherton estate, as if they honoured the name of the yeoman freeholder more than the name of the larger landlord of the surrounding area. Be that as it may, the 1721 chapel (the present chapel), for good reason, as will be seen, was called *not* Atherton Chapel, but *Chowbent*

Chapel, and has fondly retained the name ever since, as it is always likely to do, although it should be noted that the recognised name, municipally, postally, and in every sense, of the *whole* township is now, as in earlier days, ATHERTON.

Towards the building of the present chapel in 1721, "General" Wood appears to have given his £100 earned by that three days' determined fight at Preston, in which he defeated the Pretender. The Mort family gave the land. Many members of the congregation were people of substance, and they gave liberally. Others of the congregation gave of their labour. Moreover, James Wood was as shrewd and sturdy a beggar as he was a bold and gallant fighter. He went and asked a certain squire having a park between Atherton and Bolton, and whom he knew right well, to give him 20 oak trees towards the new chapel. The squire replied that 20 were rather a lot; he would not have minded if he had asked for 10. "Well," said the "General," "10 is just what I wanted, but I asked for 20 because I knew you would only offer me *half* of what I asked."

So the spacious square brick chapel, with its rich dark oak pews, deep galleries, three-decker pulpit, all excellently preserved and beautifully kept, stands on its own freehold estate, surrounded by its graveyard, its Sunday and day schools, its well-stocked library, open to and used by the whole district. The saying is that "there is not only an old root in here, but that it is ever flourishing." Friends say that few of our places are more alive! But it should also be said that, after all, the soil and situation, so to speak, are favourable to the thriving of our cause here. Our chapel and its congregation have always been livingly, and indeed leadingly, associated with some of the best life and movements in the township—social, civic, political, educational, and philanthropic. The history of the township is all intertwined with the history of the Chowbent congregation. Moreover, in a township with less than 20,000 inhabitants even at the present time, it is easily possible for a fairly strong congregation to make its influence felt. With the exception of a little ecclesiastical encounter now and again, when someone forgets who we are, and when we just have to *defend*, like "General" Wood against the "Pretender," we live on very neighbourly terms with all religious bodies, Church or Dissent. It has actually been my happy lot to take part in some religious service or other with *every* religious body in Atherton except the Roman Catholic, and these include Church, Wesleyan, Baptist, Primitives, Independents, Calvinists, and various missions. The fact seems worth recording.

Through the munificence of one member of the congregation in 1901, Chowbent Chapel was enlarged by the addition of a fine Vestibule, with Organ Chamber above, in which also, at his own cost, he placed a grand organ. Moreover, the congregation has, within recent years, added greatly to the ample and excellent school accommodation. Outside the door of the chapel is the grave of Dr. John Taylor, Tutor at the Warrington Academy, in the founding of which leading members of the Chowbent congregation took an active part. Among these none was more prominent than John Mort, whose house, now "Alderfold," is close by the chapel, at which house Mrs. Barbauld, Dr. Priestley, Thomas Belsham, Dr. Taylor, Theophilus Lindsey, Matthew Henry, and others, were once among the frequent visitors. Mrs. Barbauld's room at the house still bears her name.

When, in 1721, the congregation lost their 1645 chappell, the only "perishable assets" they brought out with them were their own oak Communion table and the silver Communion cups bearing the Mort initials, and these are in the "New Bent" (as it was mostly called)—the New Bent Chapel to-day; but I believe that that sturdy congregation and their minister the "General" brought with them, in their hearts and minds, all those "imperishable principles" which should possess, and be possessed by a sincere and earnest, a working and worshipping people to-day.

J. J. W.

Desultory Reading.

Desultory reading is often stigmatised as a mere killing of time. It may, however, be questioned whether desultory reading is not on the whole a delectable, beneficial, and even virtuous waste of time. Reading without a purpose except reading, without a hope of

learning much, passes time which would otherwise hang heavy on hand, and which in its heaviness would produce, or at least develope, both the disposition and the opportunities for mischief. It is idleness which injures; and to prevent idleness, many men, mostly industrious men, must in some sense kill time.

We daresay that opinion, stated so bluntly, will produce an outcry among our readers, or even a charge that we are teaching men to be idle. But as the world round us just now is only too ferociously active, and the Kaiser and Mr. Pierpont Morgan, and express trains and the devil are all in full movement, let us look for one moment into the facts. Is it true that the old disease, the heaviness of time of which our grandfathers used to complain so bitterly, and on which moralists expended so much melodious melancholy, has entirely disappeared? We question it greatly.

There are more opportunities of doing work, and more work is done, and more shame is felt at not working; but the extent of unoccupied time for all but the overworked has not seriously diminished. Indeed, it has slightly increased, for it is the fashion of our day for workers to work hard and intently, to put their hearts into it, and to compel themselves to do in limited slices of each day all that they formerly did through their much longer days. The lawyer of to-day works from ten, perhaps, till four; but he does in those six hours of strenuous attention all that the lawyer of seventy years ago, who worked at home, and never left wholly off, did in sixteen hours of his easy-going, interrupted, talk-broken toil. Formerly, it was the estate-owners and the retired merchants who possessed and grew weary of unfilled leisure; but now the workers have it also, and grow wearier still, because of the contrast between the vigorous life of their occupied hours, developed as that life is into a passion of hurry, and the comparative lethargy of the hours left upon their hands. There are whole classes now, not only of the leisured, but of those who work for their incomes, who have hours in the week to spare, and who, if sedentary men, and ungifted with that singular capacity for dawdling which protects some able workers, find in their "spare time"—to some men such a luxury!—an unconquerable source of disgust, and of that melancholy which, with all our new activities, does not disappear or decrease. If such a worker is not sedentary, of course, *cadit quæstio*. Nature, for man at least, is limitless; and to him who finds ever fresh enjoyment in riding, or walking, or sport, or any outdoor pursuit whatever, from geology down to amateur gardening, there are few heavy hours. Happy he, even if he does not get on, to whom the open air is always delightful, and who can turn from a desk to a green field with a sense that his grand instinctive appetite has been but whetted by all the hours of denial. Happy, too, the man with an outdoor hobby, if it is only growing pansies. The dawdler, too, is not unhappy or altogether so ignoble as it is the custom in copy books to assume. We knew a barrister once, a man of quite singular intellect and capacity, who passed a third of his time in unusually severe work—it included, of necessity, much close and continuous reading — slept through another third, and deliberately, of set purpose, dawdled away the remainder, as the only method of recuperation that with him succeeded. That is to say, he wilfully performed the ordinary operations of life—dressing, eating, strolling, and chatting—so slowly, that they covered or consumed the whole of his unoccupied time. Yet there was no harder worker, for eight hours, in the country, and no one less likely to mistake the best method of keeping his powers—reduced, we should add, by pain—at their fullest capacity. But if a man, as is the most frequent case with intellectual industrials, is brisk yet sedentary by habit and inclination, and can neither dawdle through time nor fill it with open-air enjoyments, what is so good a resource as desultory reading? Chat requires conditions not always obtainable, more especially a pleasant chattee. Day-dreaming is to many minds distinctly unwholesome, and to all slightly bewildering, the imagination once released from conditions accepting conditions again but slowly; while "thinking" is either mental exertion indistinguishable in its effect from work, or a duller kind of day-dreaming. Yet there are hours when we want to escape the idea and the atmosphere of work. Now, to involve little work and yet be pleasant, reading must be desultory; and it is for pleasure, and pleasure simply, that so many hard workers take to it. We do not see

under such circumstances where the objection to such reading comes in. The books need not be all of fiction, of course—we know at least one desultory reader who never opens a novel—the single condition being that they should relieve and excite, instead of wearing and depressing the mind. Many minds delight in almost constant reperusal of poetry, many more in sippings of classical literature, a few in historic research, and thousands in that odd medley of all things embodied in the reviews, magazines, and newspapers of to-day. They do not gain much from any of them, though it is very difficult to read any printed matter whatever, not positively bad, without some gain of some kind; but they obtain recreation in a way as unobjectionable and non-injurious as any other. A man ought to work at something to the extent of his powers; but that done, one wholesome recreation is about as good as another, and the only objection to desultory reading is its unsociability. It is a little too fascinating for the comfort of wife, or friend, or child who wants to talk; but then there is compensation even for that. Nobody talks of so many things with such interest and such a fund of stimulating, if slightly inaccurate and ill-digested, knowledge, as the desultory reader, more especially if there is any dominant thread in his mind upon which he can string his acquisitions as they come in. Nine-tenths of the women who read at all are desultory readers; and who, in a wearisome world, can talk like the woman who habitually reads, or who suffers less from that most deadly foe of happiness, the tired-out mind? In this over-busy age we put in a plea for leisure; in an age which makes a fetish of "work," we contend for the virtue of that judicious idleness which spends itself in desultory reading. We commend R. L. Stevenson's "Apology for Idlers" to this headlong generation, which sows hurry and reaps indigestion, which idolises activity for its own sake, and receives in return a large measure of nervous derangement. Let it cure its fagged brain, let it prevent many a mental breakdown, by making each day provide an idle hour for desultory reading. S.K.

"Sweetness and Light" is only the modern rendering of "Grace and Truth."

Notes and Jottings.

The religious newspapers during the past month have been full to overflowing with the May Meetings. It is curious to observe how the same problems which were pressed upon our attention at our own Conference at Liverpool occur elsewhere. Everywhere there is a feeling that denominational machinery is getting out of gear, and stands in terrible need of revision. We have not, in fact, kept pace with the advance of thought and the growth of new social conditions, and still linger amid ideas of church life which are quite inadequate for our needs. Possibly, however, the consciousness of this fact is only the prelude to change and reconstruction far more radical than any denomination hitherto has either imagined or desired. Our traditional divisions are fast becoming unreal, and the time may not be far distant when many historic landmarks will disappear, and leave men free to associate in accordance with the real affinities of their thought.

Mr. Greenhough's paper on the ministry, at the Baptist Assembly, produced a deep and painful impression. He had a terrible story to tell of poverty and incompetence. The Baptist ministry is at present over-stocked, and he urged the obvious, but not very easy, remedy of limiting the supply by raising the standard for admission. This recommendation goes to the root of the matter, for it would involve some form of corporate control, and the consequent surrender of congregationalism pure and simple. Indeed, Mr. Greenhough did not shrink from speaking in plain terms of the misuse which both churches and ministers have made of their independence.

A further proposal by Mr. Greenhough was in striking agreement with one made by the Rev. Joseph Wood at Liverpool. Its aim is to facilitate change of position among ministers, who for one reason or other ought to move on. Mr. Greenhough thinks that with the high pressure of modern life a short pastorate is the ideal for the average man. When, however, he advocates that a minister should only be invited

for five years, at the end of which time the engagement is to terminate automatically unless renewed by the congregation, he is happily going far beyond practical politics. There are many, and, as we believe, fatal objections to such a plan; not the least of them being that without some security of tenure, or reasonable prospect of a long settlement, the whole of the pastoral side of the ministry is placed at a terrible disadvantage.

The Foreign Mission Anniversaries seem to have attracted their usual crowds. They appeal to a deep-seated instinct in the evangelical churches, and are never lacking in fervour. The public attitude towards Foreign Missions is not, however, what it used to be. The recent troubles in China have made many men, whose interest is political rather than religious, doubt their expediency. But the motive on the side of religion has also undergone radical modification. There is a growing consciousness that it is no longer true to speak of saving souls from endless doom, and that the traditional Christian thought of the West may not be adequate in its appeal to the oriental mind. These things are not openly avowed upon missionary platforms, but the tone is not the same as formerly. Already it is clear that very grave problems in relation to the whole scope and method of missionary work will have to be faced shortly. Possibly the result for a time will be some waning of enthusiasm and a diminution of the number of able candidates for foreign service. In the end, however, things are bound to right themselves. Christianity is, in its issue, a missionary religion. If we send our commerce and our armies to the ends of the earth, we must also bestow our greater gifts as well. There can be no question that we ought to preach our ethics and our religious ideals. The problem is, how to do it in the most effective way.

The past month has been unusually rich in books of interest for liberal thinkers. There have been, first of all, Mr. Carpenter's volume on "The Bible in the Nineteenth Century," and "Studies in Theology," by the same author and Mr. Wicksteed. The great undertaking of the "Encyclopædic Biblica" has been brought to a close by the publication of the fourth volume. Messrs. Williams and Norgete have inaugurated a new series of theological translations with Professor Delitzsch's book on "Babel and Bible," which has caused such a sensation in Germany. The position of the book is quite familiar to scholars, disclosing as it does the intimate dependence of many things in the Bible upon Babylonian civilization. It is noteworthy, not so much for what it contains as for its happy presentation of the facts, and its success is winning the popular ear. Lastly, just as we go to press, Archdeacon Wilson's "Cambridge Lectures on Pastoral Theology" have come into our hands. They are addressed to men "who feel the call to pastoral work, but dare not sacrifice intellectual honesty and activity and freedom to 'follow the gleam.'" A glance through its pages shows that it is not lacking in courage and freshness.

News from the Field.

Overshadowing all other events since our last issue stands the great Conference held in Liverpool. "Who are these that fly as a cloud?" might have been asked, as, from all parts of the United Kingdom, there came flocking into the city by the sea the multitudes of spiritual seekers who were in search of light, guidance, and inspiration. This eighth triennial gathering was worthy of its predecessors in numbers, influence, and good feeling. Preacher, essayists, and speakers rose to a high level, and the discussions, all too brief and sketchy, were worthy of the themes which were before the Conference. Here it is not possible to summarise, and hardly to characterise, the proceedings of the fruitful meetings. Space and time alike forbid. *Mr. Carpenter* and *Mr. Wood* launched great schemes of possible co operation and consolidation on the part of our scattered congregations, and pointed out serious defects and weaknesses existing among us, which were deemed of such grave importance that little time was spent on their consideration at the moment, in order that they might be referred to the Conference Committee, to be examined in detail and definitely reported upon to a special Conference summoned for the purpose. There were not a few shoals and quicksands revealed; but good leadership, wise steering, and honest utterance enabled the Conference to come to a common understanding that there was useful work to be done, without clashing, without improper rivalry and to the good of all our institutions and congregations. Pastoral ideals and social work were well brought before the Conference by *Mr. Drummond*, *Mr. Graham*, and *Mr. C. J. Street*, and the discussions which followed were of a very useful character.

High-water mark was reached, however, in *Mr. Carpenter's* sermon, *Dr. Hunter's* magnificent address, and *Mr. Jupp's* wonderful story of the Pilgrimage of a Soul. The great meeting in St. George's Hall, with its varied speeches, would have been a great success if only the speakers could have been properly heard. As it was, much clear thinking and graceful phrasing were lost upon the large audience. Happily, the printer's art has somewhat compensated for the defective acoustics of the fine hall.

The hospitality of the Liverpool friends was ample and graceful, the good-feeling which animated the various gatherings was conspicuous and unbroken, and the impressions made were of the sweetest and most helpful character.

The gathering of ministers in the "Ancient Chapel," and the large temperance meeting in the Rhyl Street Domestic Mission Hall were a fitting termination of a most successful Conference.

The *Manchester District Sunday School Association* held its Good Friday Anniversary at Stockport. *Mr. Steinthal* was the preacher, and the old veteran was in excellent form. The crowds at all the functions were large as ever, if not larger, and the usual energy and robustness characterised all the proceedings. Evidently, there is no lack of life, progress, and hope among our Sunday school workers.

The *Western Union* annual meetings were held at Tavistock. The union among our Western Congregations is of the most happy character, and their utilization of the *Seed Sower* as a bond of union, and for the circulation of information, seems to supply a link of connection and brotherhood which is invaluable. The meeting this year was exceptionally good. There was a fine spirit in it. Its officers, missionary, and ministers are to be congratulated, and not least on the way they have secured the zealous co-operation of the best forces among the laity.

The *London District Unitarian Association* met in good spirits during the month, and presented a record of good work. *Sir D. Lawrence* was cheerful and encouraging, and *Mr. Wickstead's* report of his experiences was of a cheering character.

The *British and Foreign Associatiin* held an encouraging Council Meeting, and gave a stimulating account of its doings, and laid out its plans to be submitted to the Whit-week Anniversaries. Finances were more cheery than ever, new work in all directions was being laid out, everybody was in good spirits, and a "larger hope" was in the minds of all who were gathered together.

The *Rev. David Rees* has undertaken the charge of the congregations at Bridgend and Wick, and the *Rev. J. Tyssul Davis* has concluded his ministry at Cardiff.

The little congregation at *Aberystwyth* has just celebrated it first anniversary. The *Rev. J. C. Street*, of Shrewsbury, was the preacher. Several professors and many of the students of the University were present, and there was also a small but compact body of residents. The cause seems to be in a promising condition, and there is certainly a good hope that a permanent congregation may be established.

Our friends at Burnley have had a shock, and are awakening. They were allowed until now to form a part of the Free Church Council in that town, but now they are shut out, as Unitarians are shut out everywhere else. Some good, Catholic-minded men have resigned in consequence of what has taken place, but bigotry has gained the day, and the Evangelicals have closed the doors. Some day the religious world will discover that no one can close the doors of the Church of God.

The last few weeks have borne away with them into the Eternal presence some of our venerable co-religionists. At 95 years of age, a stalwart of Colyton, *Richard Kettle*, has laid down his work after a brave testimony for nearly a century. At the same age, 95, *Abraham Follett Osler*, of Birmingham—one of the most significant figures in the scientific and philanthropic life of the city—has entered upon his rest, at Comber, Ireland. *Mrs. John R. Neill*, widow of one of the most progressive and high-minded men of the North of Ireland, and herself a woman of rare intelligence and power, and belonging to a notable family of thinkers and workers, at 85 years of age, has peacefully closed a strenuous and useful life; and, at Fordham, *J. Stone Fletcher*, at 86 years of age, has closed a career on earth which was full of blessings to all around him. All these had been permitted to tarry long among us, and the memory of them will be precious.

May 18th, 1903. SCRUTATOR.

THE CHILDREN'S PAGE.

Self-will—The Tempter.

The first ray of light falling upon the world made the first shadow. In a dark room there are no shadows, but light a candle, and instantly your shadow leaps upon the wall. The knowledge of our Heavenly Father's will, lets us know that the opposite of His will, or anything else than His will, is wrong, because it is not His will. And thus our Heavenly Father, by telling us what is right for us to do, also tells us what is wrong. Yet we are quite free to do what He tells us, or to follow our own desires and refuse to do it. This is called *Self-will*, preferring our own way to God's way, setting ourselves up as wiser and better than God in regard to what we should do.

Sometimes our own wish is to do what our Heavenly Father tells us is right; then obedience is delightful and easy; but often our desires and passions are different from His will, and then there is a struggle between taking our own way, between Self-will and God's will, and that is how wrong-doing arises in us. It does not come from being tempted by anything outside of ourselves; but, excited by our own desires and passions, our own Self-will is the tempter. Thus wrong-doing begins when these passions and desires prevail on us to turn away from obeying our Heavenly Father, and to take our own way instead. Sometimes people give way to Self-will through carelessness, sometimes through wrong feelings of

liberality towards others; and sometimes by inflicting wrong punishments upon themselves,—then they are said to be their own worst enemy. But the commonest kind of Self-will is *selfishness*, when our desires and passions give present pleasure to ourselves, careless of the future and of whether it may bring joy or sorrow upon others; and this selfishness, ranging from giving present pleasure to ourselves, to inflicting cruelty upon others, *is the cause of most of the sorrow and misery in the world.*

Jesus, the beautiful One, is our great Example of loving unselfishness. He did not His own will, but the will of His Father in Heaven. He gave up Himself for men, He died for you and me. And as we love Jesus and wish to follow Him, we must also give up our own will when it would entice us away, and must obey our Heavenly Father as Jesus did; for, to be Self-willed, to obey our own will rather than our Heavenly Father's will, is to be without God in whatever we may do, is to be bad and not good.

And this Self-will, in disobedience to our Heavenly Father, this wrong-doing, which is called "sin," "evil," "wickedness," "badness," is begun and carried on by ourselves alone. In His loving care for us God makes known His will that we may do it, and leaves us free; our desires and passions excite us to take our own way, and we take it knowing it to be wrong, and thus badness is all of our own doing. When we do wrong, we cannot blame our Heavenly Father for it, for He tells us what is right to do. We cannot blame our friends, or any outside tempter, we can only blame ourselves, for through Self-will we do it *of free choice*, preferring our own way to the will of God. Paul, in his letter to the youthful Titus, whom he had left behind him in his travels, teaches us to deny our own wishes when they are contrary to the will of God, saying that, "The favour of God has appeared to every one to save them from badness, teaching them that by obeying God, and resisting all desires that are contrary to His will, they should live quietly and obedient to Him in this world."

I have told you that when people feel strongly inclined to take their own way in disobedience to our Heavenly Father, they say they are being tempted to do wrong. And so they are, but it is their own Self-will which tempts them. In other things, which are not matters of right and wrong, they also speak of being "tempted," and then what they mean is, *that they would like very much to do the thing, but they know it would be wiser to do something else*, and so they settle to do the wise thing, or, it may be, the foolish thing. And so also in things which *are* matters of right and wrong, our self-will tempts us to do what is not merely a foolish thing, but a bad and wrong thing, knowing all the time that it is not right.

It would, of course, be nonsense to say that our Heavenly Father tempts us away from Himself; and as people do not like to blame themselves they have sought to put the blame of their wrong-doing upon someone else, and so they speak of a tempter outside of themselves, whom they blame for what are their own faults. This thing they have called "devil," "satan," "evil spirit," and many other names, and a very good man, at one time, believing he saw this tempter in his room, flung his ink bottle at it, but the only result was a splutter of ink, and a crash of his bottle on the wall, for he had flung it at nothing. Some people have imagined this tempter, or devil, to be a great person, more beast than man, and have drawn pictures of it, with a hairy body and horns and a barbed tail that frighten little children. They have even drawn ugly pictures of many tempters, or devils, big and little, just as you might draw anger as a monkey, falsehood as a serpent, cruelty as a tiger, greed as a toad, and selfishness as a wasp. But pictures of tempters or devils, while often amusing, are always false and foolish things, so that you need pay no heed to them.

Strange to tell, people who say there is a tempter outside of themselves, whom they blame for their wrong-doing, also say that more people in the world obey this tempter than obey God; which is like saying that this thing is more powerful than God, and that would be a very strange thing to say. Knowing that the only tempter is our own Self-will, excited by our own desires and passions, you will not be led away by man's fondness for personifying things and calling them "He," until they get to believe that their own Self-will is a sort of man-brute outside of themselves. According to them there would be two Gods—a God of good and a God of bad. But this cannot be, for, as I have told you, our Heavenly Father is a living Spirit, and the cause of all good, while badness is *not the presence of anything at all*, but only the absence of God, without God, in what we do. Tempter or devil, then, is not a Spirit, or even a thing, but is only another name for our own Self-will, excited into opposition to our Heavenly Father's will, by those wishes, desires, and passions within us which would persuade and entice us to reject the way which He has made known, and to take our own Self-willed, selfish way instead. Other tempter there is none.

And while it is true that many people follow their own Self-will, rather than the will of God their Heavenly Father, these are the people who do harm in the world, for they are not great or good. But it is *not* true that our Self-will, excited by these passions and desires, is stronger than His presence within us, if only we pray and wait patiently on Him and earnestly try to obey. In a letter to his friends in the town of Corinth, Paul says that God is faithful, and will not let us be tempted more than we can resist, but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, so that we may be able to resist the temptation and obey Him. And James, in his short letter, says that we are to obey God, and to resist temptation, and it will leave us, and that if we draw near to God He will draw near to us.